

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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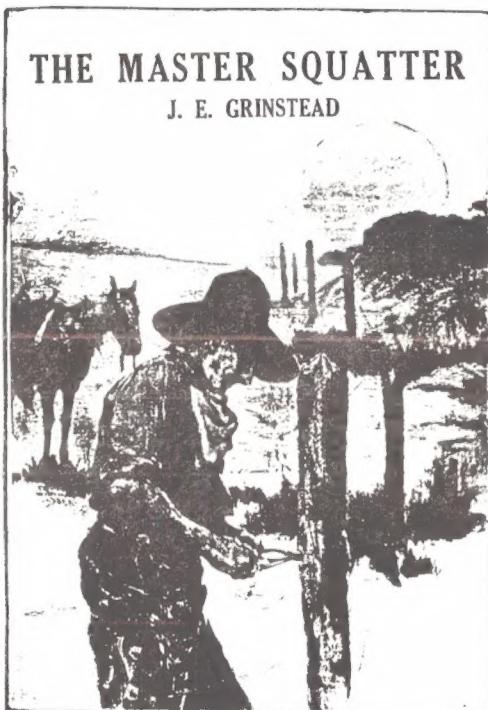
Vol. 62 No. 5

December 1993

Whole No. 624

PRENTIS INGRAHAM'S BEADLES DIME NOVELS ABOUT BUCK TAYLOR

By James L. Evans



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #263

WESTERN SERIES

Publisher: Garden City Publishing Co., Garden City, NY. Issues: 34?
Dates: 1926-1927. Schedule: Not known. Size: 7 7/8 x 5 1/8". Pages: 200-225. Price: Not shown (probably 15¢ to 25¢). Illustration: Colored pictorial cover. Contents: Contemporary western novels.

PRENTISS INGRAHAM'S BEADLE DIME NOVELS ABOUT BUCK TAYLOR

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In 1884 Buffalo Bill Cody exhibited his former ranchhand Buck Taylor in his Wild West Show as an amiable, gentle, attractive cowboy skilled with broncos and lariats. Three years later, Buffalo Bill's publicist (who was dime novelist Prentiss Ingraham) took the name and fame of Buck Taylor the entertainer and created a dime novel hero who saved Texas ranchers from Mexicans, Comanches, and outlaws. During the next two years Cody and Ingraham used these two Buck Taylors, and in doing so, changed the image of the American cowboy from that of a degenerate reckless drunken rowdy to that of a noble hero to be admired and loved.

This article will give a brief account of the real Buck Taylor and then dwell at more length on the fictitious Buck Taylor of the Beadle dime novels. It will deal primarily with BUCK TAYLOR; KING OF THE COWBOYS, which is the one that did the most to develop the character of Buck Taylor and to change the public image of the American cowboy.

William Levi Taylor was born in Central Texas in 1857. Orphaned at six, he grew up in rural Texas, then noted for its wild cattle and wild horses. As repeatedly stated in programs of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, Taylor became a teenage cowboy "proficient in horsemanship, lassoing, and general cow-sense." And because of his skill with bucking broncos and mustangs, his friends named him Buck. At nineteen he rode north on a cattle drive to Ogallala, Nebraska, and was soon hired by Buffalo Bill as a cowboy for his ranch at North Platte. Buck was at least six foot four, had a powerful physique, and was very handsome. In 1882, the community of North Platte had a 4th of July celebration with competitions resembling those of later rodeos. The greatest star of these was Buck Taylor, whose skill was amazing, even in an area filled with cowboys.

Buffalo Bill took Buck and other cowboys with his first Wild West Show in 1883, and for the 1884 season chose to make Buck a star. He knew the task of making any cowboy into a star would be difficult. After all, the word *cowboy* and the person it suggested had been unfavorable ever since the term was created to refer to pro-British marauders who stole cattle while infesting the neutral area of Westchester County, New York, during the Revolutionary War. Even in the 1880s the cowboy was still considered a lawless untamed creature that no one would take his children to admire. But Buck Taylor had skill that would fascinate the audience, and was physically attractive. Hoping persons would admire rather than fear Buck's large frame, Buffalo Bill repeatedly advertised Buck as "amiable as a child." Cody also stressed Buck's native Texan heritage, with ancestors at the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto; in essence, he was descended from true Americans helping to civilize the West. For the 1884 show, Buffalo Bill gave Buck featured billing as "King of the Cowboys." Though Buck was advertised as gentle and handsome, his ability to ride horses, to toss around steers like sacks of flour, and to perform tricks on horseback won the hearts of Easterners who had never seen a cowboy before. Thus, by taking a real cowboy from a ranch and using him as a circus performer, Buffalo Bill quickly and easily changed the American image of the cowboy.

Following his success with Buck Taylor as a cowboy star, Buffalo

Bill, in 1887, decided to sell both the hero Buck Taylor and the American cowboy to the reading public. Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, a prolific dime novelist, had experienced wild adventures in Texas and elsewhere, and had written publicity for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show from its beginning. He had also begun to produce his dozens of dime novels about Buffalo Bill.

Ingraham introduced Buck Taylor to readers in Half-Dime Library #497, February 1, 1887, appropriately titled, BUCK TAYLOR, KING OF THE COWBOYS. Henry Nash Smith points out in VIRGIN LAND that this was "probably the earliest use of a cowboy hero in the Beadle dime novels." (p. 110) At that time Buffalo Bill's show was in its heyday, and Buck was a major attraction. Consequently, Buck Taylor the performer and Buck Taylor the dime novel character each added to the publicity and popularity of the other.

In all, the Beadle Company published six Ingraham stories about Buck Taylor. Three are in the Beadle Half-Dime Library series of about 35,000 words each, and three are in the Beadle Dime Library series and have about 70,000 words each.¹

These stories supposedly tell of Buck's youth as a scout and Texas Ranger in ranching areas of Southeastern Texas very near the Rio Grande River. Readers were already familiar with the fame of the real Buck Taylor of the Wild West Show and assumed that the events of these stories had actually taken place in Buck's younger days. The first story gives his age as eighteen; the others take place later and cover a period of several years. On one occasion alone, Buck is a Comanche captive for more than six months. The real Buck Taylor had been in Nebraska continually since the age of nineteen. And although Buck had worked as a cowboy and scout in Texas during his adolescence, he had not engaged in extensive military work against Mexicans, Indians, and outlaws, and he had not worked along the Mexican border.

Some events of the first dime novel actually occurred in 1875 when Buck was eighteen (though he had not participated in them); in the later stories neither the events nor the characters have any historical basis except for the fact that there was trouble along the Mexican border with raiders and criminals.

The first half of $\frac{1}{2}$ DL #497 develops Buck into a fictitious character having traits of the real Buck, but after this character is developed, Buck is not a cattleman or horseman at all; he is a frontier scout who is a typical Beadle dime novel hero performing highly improbable feats in saving the ranchers of Southern Texas. Though a greater horseman than any other character, in these stories his wit and cleverness are as significant as his skills in horsemanship.

Some of the characters in the subplots appear in at least two stories. These characters usually exist either to create lawlessness or to be the victims of lawlessness, and thus provide a background for the author to feature the continuing role of Buck Taylor as the savior of the Texas frontier.

BUCK TAYLOR, KING OF THE COWBOYS opens as Texas Rangers near the Rio Grande see a stranger riding toward them. They fear it is either a Mexican bandit or a Comanche, but they soon discover it is a cowboy. He is poorly dressed, has old weapons, rides a worthless pony, and is "a tall slender youth of eighteen." Before the Texas Rangers or the readers know that it is Buck Taylor, the author gives the first of his numerous descriptions of the man: He had "long arms, broad shoulders, massive chest, and the makings of a giant in his build. His face was beardless, fearless, determined, and withal reckless, while it was by no means unhandsome.

His hair, of chestnut hue, was long, falling below his shoulders, his teeth white and even, and his eyes piercing and seeming to take in at a glance all that they were turned upon." (§DL #497, 2:2)

This young six-foot-four stranger asks for Captain McNally and announces that he has come to volunteer as a Texas Ranger. An actual Captain Leander McNelly had served in the Civil War, and in 1875 was appointed as a Captain of the Texas Rangers to preserve peace along the Mexican border.²

When one husky Ranger criticizes the stranger's lack of years and his inadequate equipment, the stranger challenges him to a wrestling match. Says the youth: "I thought to join yer band to fight with you against the Greasers and Injuns, and I hopes I haven't got to lick you all before you make my acquaintance." (§DL #497, 2:2) The youth quickly overpowers his insulter and wins the respect of all. Then the stranger introduces himself to the Rangers and to the readers with "I'm a young greenhorn Texan, who knows little more than herding, riding and shooting, with a little experience at Indian trailing." He says that his parents had named him William Levi Taylor, but the cowboys had named him "Buck Taylor on account of there being no bucking horse I couldn't ride," (2:3)

After that moment, no character in this dime novel or the later ones asks his name. His feats of skill and his successes against the enemies have made him famous. Everyone, whether a Texas rancher needing protection or a Mexican raider fearing capture, knows Buck Taylor.

The Rangers soon tell Buck that there is a bronco in camp that no one can ride. Buck asks to try. Ingraham describes the attempt: "The horse bounded into the air, and kept up a terrific series of leaps, squatting, plunging, shying and vicious biting at the rider, until he was utterly worn out and conquered, the horseman meanwhile seeming to care but little for the mad antics." (2:2) The Rangers watch Buck with admiration and amazement, and Captain McNally announces that when "properly armed and mounted," Buck would be "about the best man" of the group of the "wildest riders and deadliest shots on the Texas plains."

In all of the six dime novels, Buck Taylor engages in much competition with his opponents, which are sometimes human beings, sometimes animals, and sometimes geographical features.

Because of Buck's skill, wisdom, and help in minor skirmishes, the other Rangers begin to call him by the title that Buffalo Bill made famous—"King of the Cowboys." Buck soon gets a new horse, buys new clothes and weapons, and looks respectable. In recreational events around the camp, he wins nine out of every ten shooting matches and every horserace.

With such comments as "I will pass over some months of life on the Texas border," Ingraham says he will dwell on a few specific events that tell us about Buck Taylor. One is about a specific encounter with Comanches. While Buck is working alone as a scout, he is ambushed and then captured by "half a hundred red-skins." The details of his experience make up a large part of the story and reveal much about the fictitious character of Buck. As a prisoner, Buck daily sees a white girl that has been held captive for years—and absurdly enough, she just happens to be Captain McNally's daughter. With Buck's insight, skill, trickery, endurance, and the help of a Comanche whom he had once befriended, Buck and the girl finally escape and return to camp. Captain McNally, who had originally gone into service to get revenge on the Indians, is so happy about his daughter's return that he wants to give up his command as a Ranger Captain and return to civilian life as a family man and rancher. But the captain is so noble that he feels obligated to remain a Texas Ranger until he rids the area of Rafael and his band of Mexican bandits

who frequently raid the Texas ranches, stealing cattle and destroying property.

Then follows an account of the Rangers successfully capturing Rafael because of Buck Taylor's ingenious scheme. While Buck and one other Ranger are reconnoitering along the Rio Grande to learn about the plans of Rafael's gang, Buck sees the other Ranger secretly cross into Mexico and talk to a "vicious-looking" Mexican. Buck suspects treachery, so he removes the bullet from the other man's gun. The man fears that Buck suspects his dealings with the bandits and knows that Buck would not tolerate anyone's cooperating with the enemy. Therefore, the evil Ranger decides to kill Buck. He fires his gun, and Buck falls to the ground, pretending to be dead. The other man returns to camp with Buck's fine horse and announces that Buck was killed by Mexican bandits. When Buck, very haggard and exhausted, eventually returns to camp on foot, he tells Captain McNally what has happened and challenges the bad Ranger to a duel. Buck insists to the Captain that the reason be kept secret, saying "It must never be known that the Rangers had a traitor so vile among them." (10:3) In the duel, Buck kills the traitor. Though none of the other Rangers knows the reason for the duel, everyone naturally knows that Buck is in the right.

While reconnoitering with this man, Buck had learned much about Rafael's Raiders and their plans to attack Texas ranches. With this knowledge, Buck devises a way to capture the bandits: The Rangers will linger close to the river within easy view of the Raiders who are on the south side of it. Buck will pretend to have a serious argument with Captain McNally. Buck will then fire his rifle at McNally, who will fall. The other Rangers will naturally attack Buck, but he will flee on horseback, jump a wide chasm, swim the river, approach Rafael's gang, and beg to lead it in an attack on the Rangers. Since unscrupulous and/or dissatisfied men of all nationalities frequently changed sides for revenge or money or other reasons, Buck's plan is plausible. At first the other Rangers discourage Buck, saying that not even he can jump that wide chasm, but finally they consent to his plan. The fake feud and shooting take place, Buck easily jumps the chasm, and he goes to the Raiders, who accept him as a member of their gang. As previously planned with the Rangers, Buck leads the Raiders into the Rangers' trap. This dime novel ends with Rafael being captured and executed and his followers being sent to various prisons.

A footnote on the first page of this story tells that at the time of its publication Buck Taylor is with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and the final one-column conclusion mentions an article, supposedly from "a New York paper" of 1885, giving the same information. These two references in $\frac{1}{2}$ DL #497 are the only mention in any of Ingraham's dime novels that Buck Taylor was ever with the show or that he had ever left Texas. The conclusion also says that Captain McNally had retired from service and had become "a very wealthy man owning large cattle interests." (15:2)

Buck's size and physique are emphasized throughout the story and correspond to those of the real Buck, but Ingraham gives no physical description of McNally. The actual McNelly, though gaining much distinction in various battles and especially for his role as captain of the Texas Rangers, was almost effeminate in appearance; and legend says that as a scout and spy in the Civil War, he was often disguised as a woman. The real McNelly suffered from tuberculosis and fatally succumbed to it in 1877, nearly ten years before the publication of the dime novel saying he was then "a very wealthy man." But McNelly has been a famous Texan, and many Eastern readers had surely heard of him before reading the story.

Ironically in less than six months after this dime novel was published, Buck Taylor was seriously injured when thrown from a horse during a performance in London. Buffalo Bill then assigned Buck to operating a concession, and Buck never returned to his major role in the spotlight.³

After BUCK TAYLOR, KING OF THE COWBOYS, no other dime novel about Buck Taylor appeared until April, 1891—more than three and a half years later and long after Buck Taylor had left the Buffalo Bill show. Three stories came out in April and June and are in the Beadle Dime Library series. Their titles are logical and significant: BUCK TAYLOR, THE SADDLE KING (#649), THE LASSO KING'S LEAGUE (#653), and THE COWBOY CLAN (#658). A central figure in these three is Tiger Tom, who seems to have a split personality. A charming scoundrel named Tom Trescott had once deserted the army; he had later committed murders and robberies, then fled to Mexico where he had created more trouble and served time, and later returned to Southern Texas. He is now known as Tiger Tom and heads the Tigers of Texas. Each member of this outlaw gang has a brand inside the left hand and secretly participates in raids on the ranches. Since the Tigers frequently loiter in the bars of the isolated towns, they can easily be captured, and everyone knows that Tom's men are guilty. Unfortunately, however, there is no real proof of their guilt, and neither Buck nor the military officers will permit the other men to kill any man without evidence of his guilt. Also, Tiger Tom has a lovely wife who is devoted to him; all good men admire her greatly and wonder why she loves Tom. Buck and his men have numerous adventures that could easily be created by a prolific dime novelist like Prentiss Ingraham but would never occur in real life. In the second of these three dime novels of early 1891, THE LASSO KING'S LEAGUE, OR THE TIGERS OF TEXAS, Buck (who is naturally the lasso king) and his league are constantly performing noble deeds in efforts to get rid of Tiger Tom and his men. Finally Tiger Tom challenges Buck to a duel, and of course in a duel Buck can kill his foe honorably—and of course he does. A former military doctor who has turned rancher (and whose lovely teenage daughter had once been captured by Comanches and later rescued by Buck) pronounces Tom dead, and he is buried. Tiger Tom—or his ghost—soon begins to reappear in the area but never speaks to anyone. After he approaches his own ranchhouse but leaves without even speaking when his wife calls to him, the grieving widow vows to get revenge on Tom and decides to organize her own gang of scoundrels to capture and kill her husband.

The next story is THE COWBOY CLAN, OR THE TIGRESS OF TEXAS. Buck, the good cowboys, and the Texas ranchers all assume that the wife's vow for revenge on her husband is a disguise to hide her raids on the ranches. There are thousands of words about intrigues, ambushes, and schemes—punctuated by occasional accounts of Comanche raids. And throughout all of these are references to Buck Taylor's skill with rifle, lariat, and horse, to his wisdom in outwitting the enemy, and to his splendid physique and fine character. Finally the author explains the reappearance of the dead man by starting—not at all convincingly—that Tiger Tom had an identical twin who had been living in the area. No one, not even the wife, had known that everyone had sometimes seen one brother and sometimes the other.

In September, and October, 1891, Beadle published two more Half-Dime novels about Buck Taylor. Perhaps because they are only half as long, these two do not include as many farfetched incidents and they seem better constructed than those in the Dime Library series. One is BUCK TAYLOR, THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE (JDL #737). The title is certainly appropriate even though Buck Taylor is a Comanche captive in other stories also. Descrip-

tions throughout this story seem even more vivid and effective than in the others. After the opening scene in which a band of Comanches comes for a raid on ranch homes, the author gives a typical description:—"a youth yet in his teens—a youth clad in buckskin, wearing a belt of arms, having a rifle slung at his back, and who looked like a dangerous foe, young as he was...His hair was long, and fell almost to his waist. His face was beardless and expressive of daring, resolution and utter fearlessness...His form was tall, slender, but wiry and supple." (2:1) It is Buck Taylor. He has travelled rapidly for miles, exhausting his horse before he meets a ranch sentinel with words that "The Indians are coming...warn the ranches and settlements." (2:2) The ranches are saved because of Buck's warning; however, there is a skirmish between the whites and the Comanches. Though Buck kills five Indians, he is wounded; both he and the ten-year-old daughter of a rancher are captured. During the several months of their captivity, Buck continuously protects her.

A significant character in this story is Buckskin Sam. He was a real person named Sam Hall. He had been a noted Texas scout in the 1850s and early 1860s, and he and Prentiss Ingraham had known each other in Texas. After the Civil War, Hall returned East and became a dime novelist. According to Ingraham's *DL* #737, Buckskin Sam and Buck Taylor had been old friends in Texas, but a glance at dates shows that Sam had returned East before Buck was in his teens. Nevertheless, the fictitious Buckskin Sam (whose experiences resembled those of the real Buckskin Sam) and the fictitious Buck Taylor (whose experiences in no way resembled those of the real Buck Taylor) make good companions in a dime novel of Texas adventure. Though *BUCK TAYLOR, THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE* ends with the statement that Buck and Sam are always welcomed guests at the home of the rancher whose daughter they had saved, the real Sam had been dead for more than five years before the story was published (and perhaps nearly that long before it was written).

Many thousands of persons all over the U.S. and Europe had seen the real Buck Taylor displaying his skill with a bucking bronco and a lariat; Eastern audiences had learned to identify these two items with him, but after the first story of 1877, the character Buck makes little use of the lariat; and in *BUCK TAYLOR, THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE*, he makes practically none. Buck Taylor is the hero; he saves ranches; he shows his adaptability to Comanche life; his presence provides safety to the captured girl. He also kills Indians, thus providing action and assuring the reader that he is making life safer in wild Texas. He is a dime-novel hero, but he is neither a cowboy performing the work done by real cowboys nor the Buck Taylor performing to circus audiences.

In *DL* #743, *BUCK TAYLOR'S BOYS, OR THE RED RAIDERS OF THE RIO GRANDE*, Buck is the leader of a group of cowboys appropriately called "Buck Taylor's Boys." They herd cattle and horses for the government posts and insure safety for the settlers. In other stories Buck has always won the respect of his fellow cowboys who invariably follow his suggestions, but in this story he is officially the leader. Repeatedly in this story the author not only shows Buck's skill in leadership but also mentions the other characters' respect and love for Buck—as a cowboy, as a comrade, and as a leader against the enemy. For example, when Buck saves a young widow from the Indians, the author states that she knew if it had not been for Buck, she and many of the cowhands on her ranch would have been captured and killed, and all of the ranches of the area would have been raided and destroyed by Comanches.

Repeatedly Ingraham praises Buck's Boys. A typical example is: "To the soldiers and ranch people...they had won a reputation as the most

daring lot of horsemen, and the best fighters of the Texas Plains...Wild riders, typical cowboys they were, too, caring well for their cattle and protecting them from red-skins and [Mexican] raiders alike." (4:1) And he gives numerous examples to illustrate the generalization that the work of Buck's Boys is "well known to the whold Comanche tribe."

The story ends with the wedding of one of Buck's Boys to the woman whom Buck had saved. Buck gives the bride away and takes the couple to meet the nearest train. Ingraham concludes the story with the summarizing comment that Buck returns to his duties. Although the conclusion suggests that there will be more sequels about Buck Taylor, Ingraham did not write any more. He did, however, later write dozens of stories about Buffalo Bill—a fictitious Buffalo Bill, not the historical one.

In Prentiss Ingraham's first half-dime novel about Buck Taylor, his skill with the lariat and his ability to ride wild broncos gain him acceptance into the Texas Rangers, but almost immediately thereafter Ingraham uses Buck's natural courage, adaptability to frontier life, and wit to make Buck a superman saving the ranches of Southern Texas from Mexican bandits, Comanche raiders, and criminalistic whites (often disguised as either Mexicans or Indians). In the Wild West Show, Buck Taylor's size of six-foot-four and his good looks and gentleness are assentuated; many photographs of him still exist. In the dime novels, his size and looks are often mentioned as physical traits but not significant ones. His skills that enable him to save Texas ranches are the important things.

Important as Buck Taylor was in changing the image of the cowboy, he has passed into oblivion and is nearly forgotten today. One evening in July, 1992, I visited the Buffalo Bill Rest Ranch, a noted tourist attraction in North Platte and the place where Buck actually worked before joining the Wild West Show. None of the three employees on duty at that time had ever heard of Buck Taylor. William J. Savage, Jr. did dedicate his COWBOY LIFE: RECONSTRUCTING AN AMERICAN MYTH to "William Levi Taylor" in 1974, but few books mention Buck. Certainly both the real Buck Taylor of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and the fictitious Buck Taylor of Prentiss Ingraham's dime novels deserve to be remembered. Both the skilled horseman and the fictitious superman helped bring respectability to the role of the American cowboy even though neither of these two resembled the typical working cowboy.

NOTES

¹ Besides these six, which are listed in the bibliography, Banner Weekly #347 (July 6, 1889, and later reprinted as DL #834) includes the character Buck Taylor, but it is not primarily about him. This story is entitled THE WILD STEER RIDERS; OR, THE RED REVOLVER RANGERS.

² Ingraham gives no first name and spells the surname McNally. The Ranger captain was Leander McNelly. Ingraham's account of McNally's activities closely parallel those of McNelly along the Mexican border, especially concerning the unauthorized invasion of Mexico where innocent peons were slaughtered because the Rangers were at the wrong ranch.

³ Buck left the show in Germany in the middle of a season, returned to the U.S., and later started his own show which was never successful. Of numerous accounts consulted about Buffalo Bill and his show, none tells why Buck left the show or casts any blame on either him or Cody.

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A STORY OF THE WILD AND THRILLING LIFE OF WILLIAM LEVI TAYLOR.
February 1, 1887.

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| DL #649 | BUCK TAYLOR, THE SADDLE KING; OR, THE LASSO RANGERS' LEAGUE. A ROMANCE OF BORDER HEROES OF TODAY. April 1, 1891. |
| DL #653 | THE LASSO KING'S LEAGUE; OR, THE TIGERS OF TEXAS. A ROMANCE OF HEROES IN BUCKSKIN. April 29, 1891. |
| DL #658 | THE COWBOY CLAN; OR, THE TIGRESS OF TEXAS. A ROMANCE OF BUCK TAYLOR AND HIS BOYS IN BUCKSKIN. June 3, 1891. |
| ½DL #737 | BUCK TAYLOR, THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE; OR, BUCKSKIN SAM TO THE RESCUE. A ROMANCE OF LONE STAR HEROES. September 8, 1891. |
| ½DL #743 | BUCK TAYLOR'S BOYS; OR, THE RED RIDERS OF THE RIO GRANDE. A ROMANCE OF LIFE AMONG THE RANGERS AND THE RAIDERS OF THE SOUTHWEST BORDER. October 20, 1891. |

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Part 1		Company Shilling Analysis	
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Source of Income: <u>from the</u>		Source: <u>11</u>	Source: <u>11</u>
A. Total No. Copies (All Periods)		<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>
B. Post office Restricted Circulation			
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C. Total Post office Restricted Circulation		<u>270</u>	<u>265</u>
D. Sales outside Post office Restricted Circulation			
1. Single copies sold		<u>270</u>	<u>265</u>
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G. Total (Sum of E, F, and G) - should equal net price per issue in 2d		<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>
<p>I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete</p> <p><u>G. Charles F. Korman</u></p>		<p>Signature of this Father: <u>Korman</u></p>	

NUMISMATICS ACCORDING TO BEADLE

By E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra

Beadle and Adams may be the only cheap publishing house to have invented a nonexistent American coin: the 1877 U.S. half-dime! They were not the first to use a picture of the coin required to purchase their publication—Maturin M. Ballou of Boston used a cut of the "seated liberty" silver dollar on the wrappers of his *Dollar Monthly Magazine* in the 1850s—but the woodcut dimes and half-dimes became a hallmark logo of many Beadle publications until 1894. (In that year the U.S. Department of the Treasury forbade the use of full-sized representations of American currency.)

Beadle first depicted an 1860 half-dime on the cover of the sole issue of *Beadle's Half Dime Novelettes* using an obverse cut at each of the four corners and a reverse cut between the words "Half" and "Dime." The *Dime Novels*, *Classic Stories*, *Dime Tales*, *Library of Choice Fiction*, *New Dime Novels*, *Pocket Novels*, *Dime Biographical Library*, handbooks, songbooks, dialogues, *Base-Ball Player*, speakers, and *Dime Fiction* series all featured the reverse cut of a U.S. dime. The English *Sixpenny* books used a reverse cut of a British sixpence.

In 1877, after severe competition from Chicago's *Nickel Library* and its imitators, Beadle launched the broadleaf *Half Dime Library* with a new obverse cut of a seated liberty half-dime, dated 1877. A year later the *New York Dime Library* was revamped from *Frank Starr's New York Library*, featuring an obverse cut of an 1878 U.S. seated liberty dime.

Beadle and Adams failed to notice that the U.S. Mint had stopped production of silver half-dimes by an Act of Congress of February 12, 1873. By 1877, only the "shield nickel, introduced in 1866, was in circulation, to be followed by the well-known "liberty nickel" in 1883. (This coin appears on the covers of Beadle's *Pocket Library*.)

The seated liberty coins which served Beadle so well both as specie income and as a trademark were the product of Mint Engraver Christian Gobrecht (1785-1844) who based his dies on a design by Thomas Sully. All U.S. silver coinage from the half-dime to the half dollar, including the short-lived twenty-cent coin, bore this design from 1837 to 1891, as did silver dollars from 1840 to 1873.

* * * * *

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS OF INTEREST TO COLLECTORS

EDWARD STRATEMEYER AND THE STRATEMEYER SYNDICATE, by Didi Johnson, Twayne Publishers, 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, 195 pages. A very complete review of the Stratemeyer Syndicate series from the ROVER BOYS to the HARDY BOYS and NANCY DREW. A description of each series with a short synopsis of the stories. A must for all Stratemeyer collectors. \$23.95.

YESTERDAY'S FACES VOL. 6 VIOLENT LIVES, by Robert Sampson, Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH 43403. This is Bob Sampson's last book before he died. He reviews the adventurers, spies and warriors in the pulps with a review of the stories. A great overview of the violent pulps. \$39.95 clothbound; \$18.95 paperbound.

* * * * *

Wanted: Works of CHARLES WARREN STODDARD who was writing during the 1860 to 1908 period. Also: A MARRIAGE BELOW ZERO, by Alan Dale (Alfred J. Cohen) published by Dillingham, 1st edition 1889 in paper covers.

Greg S. Johnson, 820 North Madison, Stockton, CA 98502

THE "LOST MERRIWELLS" — I:
FRANK MERRIWELL'S VENTURE

By E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra

"It always seemed a fine idea to me to build a showboat with just one big flat open deck on it, and to keep a play going continuously. The boat wouldn't be moored, but would drift up and down the river on the tide, and the audience would sit along both banks. They could catch whatever part of the plot happened to unfold as the boat floated past, and then they'd have to wait until the tide ran back again to catch another snatch of it, if they still happened to be sitting there. To fill in the gaps they'd have to use their imaginations... Most times they wouldn't understand what was going on at all..."

—John Barth, *THE FLOATING OPERA*, NY: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1956

INTRODUCTION

Gilbert Patten's FRANK MERRIWELL saga, which unfolded in the pages of Street & Smith's *Tip Top Library/Weekly* between 1896 and 1916, has always reminded me of John Barth's imaginary showboat. For those of us latter-day readers who have encountered the Merriwells as scarce "collectibles," usually in the later "thick book" reprints, the continuity lurches randomly in both directions, depending on occasional lucky finds.

I first encountered the fictional brothers in *Merriwell Library* No. 142: DICK MERRIWELL, FRESHMAN, then in McKay hardcover editions of FRANK MERRIWELL'S CHUMS and COURAGE, and so on, acquiring a book here and there. Periodically, (usually during flu season) I would reread the ones I had in numerical order.

After putting together a complete run of the McKay hardcover editions and a miscellaneous lot of individual *Tip Tops*, *Medal/New Medal Libraries*, *Merriwell Series* and *Burt L. Standish Libraries*, I realized that there seemed to be some omissions in the "thick book" reprints. In 1990, Eddie LeBlanc's STREET & SMITH DIME NOVEL BIBLIOGRAPHY PART II: THE MERRIWELLS confirmed my suspicion. Some 36 of the original *Tip Tops* were never reprinted in the thick formats. Eleven of them were reissued in the 20 *Tip Top Quarterly* volumes, made up from the weekly plates, but these are scarcer than the nickel weeklies themselves.

Thanks to the kind assistance of Mr. LeBlanc and some fellow-collectors, I recently obtained *Tip Tops* 33 through 39 and began to understand why these stories were not among the many reprints issued by Street & Smith from 1902 through 1933.

One of the MERRIWELL series' greatest strengths has always been a certain timelessness. Specific references to contemporary technology add a period charm, but the characterizations, philosophy and general attitudes of the stories hold up very well, even after nearly a century.

Occasionally, Patten introduced current events as a backdrop for the heroic exploits of his characters. Thus, Frank battles an anti-Dreyfus cabal in Paris at the height of "L'Affaire Dreyfus," and Dick becomes embroiled in Central American revolutions in 1911. This feature, which Patten used sparingly, "dates" certain stories and lessens their fictional appeal, although making them of great value to historians studying "attitudes towards ..." I think Patten recognized that too much "reality" limited his heroes' scope of action. A fictional character might strive to prevent, say, the assassination of President McKinley, but Leon Czolgosz' bullet will always find its mark, unless the story is a "parallel universe" sci-fi fantasy.

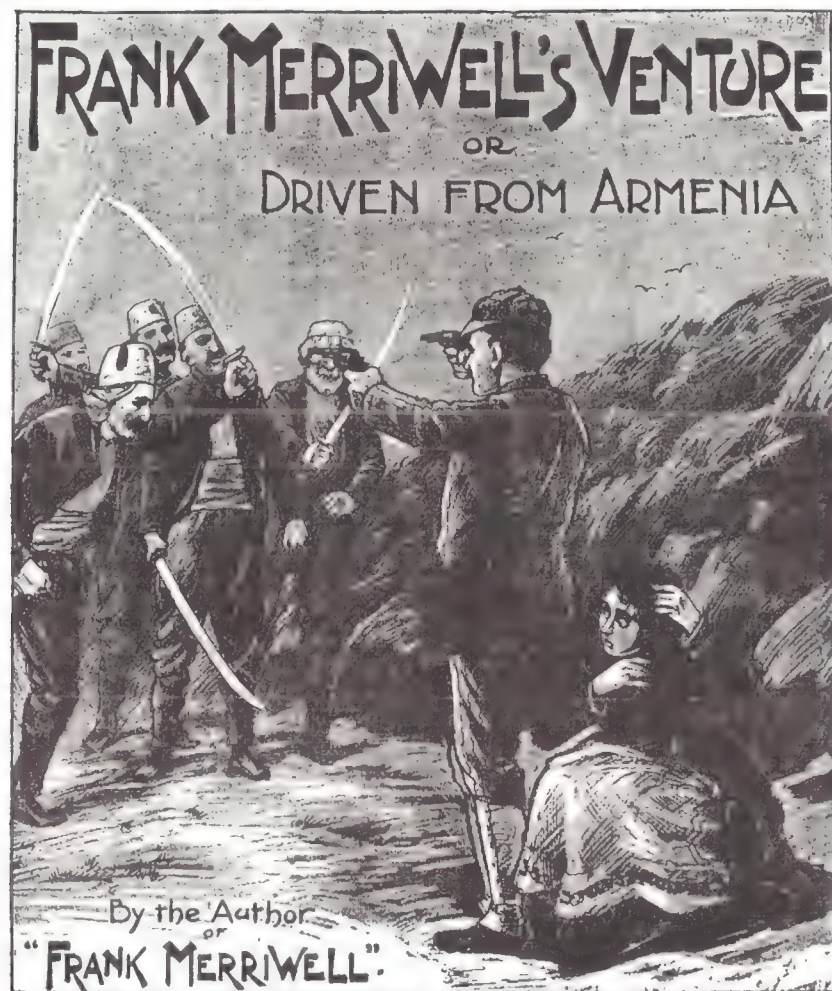
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Issued Weekly - By Subscription \$3.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

November 28, 1896.

Vol. 1. No. 33.

Price Five Cents.



By the Author
OF
"FRANK MERRIWELL".

"STAND BACK!" CRIED FRANK, COMMANDINGLY. "NOT ONE OF YOU SHALL LAY A HAND ON HER!"

A case in point is the "lost" tale of FRAND MERRIWELL'S VENTURE; OR, DRIVEN FROM ARMENIA, *Tip Top Library* No. 33, November 28, 1896. This is an unusually grim and bloody story, inspired by the ongoing civil war between the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian minority in 1895 and 1896.

The former Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and a portion of northeastern Turkiye (pronounced TOORK-yeh) comprises the very ancient land of Armenia, a mountainous region between the Caucasus Mountains of Georgia and Mesopotamia to the south. It includes Mt. Ararat and inhabited valleys fought over since the Bronze Age. This land had the misfortune to be a vital crossroads for Hittites, Assyrians, Scythians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, Turks, Kurds, Russians and dozens of other aggressors. The armies of Tiglath Pileser II, Alexander of Macedon, Mark Antony, Trajan, Belisarius and the Hulagu Khan laid waste the settlements and deported the survivors on a fairly regular basis. Yet the Armenians managed to flourish between holocausts, under leaders like Tigran the Great and the later Armenian-born Byzantine emperor John Zimiscus.

Under King Tiridates, Armenia was converted to Christianity in the fourth century A.D. by St. Gregory the Illuminator. Although within the Byzantine sphere, Armenia refused to espouse Byzantine religious orthodoxy, remaining independent of Constantinople and the Islamic conquerors in the centuries following the fall of Rome. Its art, literature and philosophy were a successful blend of eastern and western cultures. "Armenian influence on Byzantium," wrote Stephen Runciman, in *BYZANTINE CIVILIZATION*, "was probably greater than Byzantine influence on Armenia." Under the Bagratid dynasty, whose capital was at Ani, Armenia experienced its golden age in the tenth century. Even after the Seljuks crushed Armenian power, refugees created the kingdom of "Lesser Armenia" in Cilicia (St. Paul's birthplace, Tarsus, is in Cilicia) and became a vassal state, first of Byzantium and later of the French crusader kingdom on Cyprus. After the First Crusade, King Levon I of the Roupenid dynasty at Sis acknowledged the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI, as his suzerain.

Their Turkish overlords had begun migrating westward when Hulagu Khan's Mongol horde swept through Asia in the thirteenth century, A.D. Originally nomads from the Altai Mountains, the Turks had forged two empires in the 6th and 7th centuries, A.D. After the western empire was destroyed by the armies of Tang China in 630, the eastern Turks still controlled the area from Outer Mongolia to the Caspian Sea. Leaving their ancestral homes in the Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, (the "Uighur Autonomous Region" of China's Sinjiang province) several waves of Turki-speaking tribes began to invade the eastern portions of Anatolia. Some found employment as mercenaries in the Arab armies. The Seljuk Turks, who formed the bodyguard of the later Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, assumed more and more power from the ninth to eleventh centuries. After occupying Syria, Persia and Mesopotamia, the Seljuks took Georgia and Armenia and defeated the Byzantine army at Manzikert (Malzگرد) in 1071, taking Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes captive.

During the clashes between Islam and Christendom known as the Crusades, Armenian Christians were usually caught in the middle. The Saracens suspected them of treachery, while the Crusaders despised them as non-European. Both sides slaughtered them when they got in the way. (Incidentally, the ideal Islamic warrior Salah-ed-Din al Ayyub, known as Saladin, was a Kurd. Thus was established hatred and suspicion between Kurds and Armenians.)

In the next century, the Mongol advance pushed the Osmanli Turks (their chieftan was Osman, or Uthman, hence "Ottoman") out of Asia and

into the Seljug territories, where they commenced a lightning takeover of Seljug and Byzantine lands. Although briefly interrupted by the Mongols under Timur Lenk (Tamborlane) in 1402, the Osmanlis resumed their conquests in Europe and North Africa.

Against the common Mongol enemy, the Ottomans welcomed alliances with the indigenous peoples of their new empire. Thus, many Kurds and Armenians served heroically in the Turkish defence forces. At Sivas, Timur surrounded about 4,000 Armenian cavalry and buried them alive after they surrendered!

After Mohammed II took Constantinople by storm in 1453, the Ottoman Turks invaded eastern Europe, reaching as far as Budapest and Vienna. Although checked by several European coalitions, such as the Holy League at Lepanto in 1571, the Turks retained large portions of the Balkans, Greece and much of the Middle East. Their 1683 defeat at Vienna proved to be their high-water mark.

Christian Armenia was an embarrassment to the Ottoman Sultans in their quest to create a homogeneous, orthodox Islamic empire. The Ottomans were a "johnny-come-lately" minority and never forgot it. After the destruction of Byzantium in 1453, many Armenian survivors were "resettled" far from their original homeland on the Black Sea to Cilician Lesser Armenia. Periodically, the remaining Armenians suffered devastating attacks from Turkish regular troops and allied mountain tribesmen from Kurdistan. The Kurds used these religious "jihad" as an excuse to carry on tribal warfare with their old enemies and were thus quite useful to Ottoman policy in the region.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II, el Ghazi "the victorious" (1842-1918) who ruled the empire from the Istanbul Seraglio from 1875 to 1909, was a regressive and weak ruler, who aspired to become a "Grand Turk" like his medieval forebears. During his campaign to be recognized as the spiritual leader of Islam, he ruthlessly quashed all opposition from Moslem and Christian factions within his empire, and opposition there was aplenty.

Particularly odious to many groups was the successful Kapi Kullari, or "slave institution" which took Christian children and trained them to total obedience to the Sultanate. According to Barbara Tuchman, this successful system "filled every civil post from palace cook to Grand Vizier." (THE MARCH OF FOLLY FROM TROY TO VIETNAM, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984, p. 384) The Janissaries (Yeni Cheri) were the military arm of this establishment, whose power grew to the point where they made and unmade Sultans, like Rome's Praetorian guard.

Turkey, "the Sick Man of Europe," was as much a victim of its strategic location as the Kurds and Armenians were. Prerevolutionary France had repeatedly supported the Turks against common enemies in the dynastic wars of 17th-century Europe. A century later, Turkey became a pawn in Russia's attempts to conquer a warm-water seaport and England's efforts to maintain clear land routes to India. The futile Crimean War of 1854-1856 was the most obvious result.

Even as this article is being written, violent confrontations between Armenia and Azerbaijan are occurring in the power vacuum left by the collapse of the former USSR. The Kurds have now become the victims of Iraqi oppression.

When Gilbert Patten and his publisher Ormond G. Smith planned the FRANK MERRIWELL stories, they agreed to use JACK HARKAWAY as a model for the first 30 or 40 numbers. Frank would attend boarding school for a dozen installments, inherit a fortune and travel the world with a tutor and then return to attend college.

Patten structured the series pretty much according to this outline.



Sultan of Turkey

SULTAN OF TURKEY. Sultan Abdul Hamid II is now fifty-four years old. Personally, he is a man with whom intercourse is extremely pleasant. His position has been a very difficult one, and he by identifying himself with the reactionary party has made himself responsible for the terrible outrages in his empire.

Frank attended Fardale Academy in *Tip Top* numbers 1 through 12, commencing his travels with Professor H.O.T. Scotch and a succession of schoolboy chums in number 13. Each week found our hero in a new setting: New York, Chicago, Colorado, Arizona, Mexico, New Orleans, the Florida Everglades, Kentucky, Utah, and California. In Number 25, he journeyed to the MYSTIC VALLEY OF THE ANDES, thence to the Argentine Pampas, PHANTOM ISLAND in the South Seas, the African rain forest, Tangier, France, Spain and England. All these stories were later collected in "thick books" numbers 4 through 8. The next seven stories, which took Frank to Armenia, India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Japan, Australia, the South Seas again and back to America, were included in *Tip Top Quarterly* Number 3, assembled from the individual weeklies. They never saw print again! (In Number 40 Frank entered Yale University to begin the most distinguished fictional college career on record.)

(Readers of the Street & Smith paperbacks were able to follow Frank as far as England, but those who were only permitted to read the "respectable" hardcover McKay editions were catapulted directly from the African rain forest to New Haven.)

Returning to *Tip Top* No. 33, however, we see Gilbert Patten at his most didactic, outraged by the "race war" in Armenia. This incomprehensible slaughter preempted the front pages of 1895-1896 in the same way the Serbian-Bosnian civil war has during 1992-1993. (The parallels are too obvious to belabor.) Suffice it to say that the English Parliament was debating (then and now) what could be done to halt the violence. Frank Merriwell and Professor Scotch had just completed their London adventures at this point and were planning a peaceful tour of the Holy Land.

Frank is engrossed in a paperbound book about the atrocities being perpetrated by the Kurds upon the Armenians, while Scotch is complacently reading Lord Salisbury's speech in the London *Times*, agreeing that England had no reason to intervene in the affair. Calling the massacres "a blot on civilization and the nineteenth century," Frank argues that "England will be forced and shamed into crushing the detestable Sultan she is now supporting on his tottering throne. The Sultan is a Mohammedan, and all true followers of the Prophet hate Christians with a fierce and unrelenting hatred. It is a part of their religion...and they believe if they kill a Christian dog it assures them a place in Paradise."

Although Professor Scotch cautions coolness and reason, Frank is determined to visit Armenia and learn the truth at first hand. "Confound that boy!" mutters Scotch after Frank leaves the hotel for a walk, "He isn't afraid of anything. He would wade through fire and blood if he took a fancy to do so."

Now a classic dime-novel coincidence occurs: in Leicester Square he encounters Barney Mulloy, his Fardale classmate, who is visiting his sister in London. Sister Bidy has married Sadukh Marderos, an Armenian refugee, whose family lives in the worst of the Armenian war zone. At the Marderos' East End home, Frank learns of the barbarism of the Kurd chief Mousa Beg, leader of the massacres in the Sassoun district. (Mousa Beg was an actual person, notorious for his 1893 kidnapping of a beautiful Armenian woman.)

Frank and Barney make a pact to accompany Sadukh to Armenia and rescue the surviving members of his family, including his beautiful sister Lucine, from the clutches of Mousa Beg and Hassan Isnick, a Turk. Isnick's brother had tried to kidnap Lucine, but Sadukh killed him and became a fugitive. Leaving Lucine with Father O'Hara, a Catholic priest, Sadukh had left Armenia and come to England to earn enough money to rescue Lucine and their father. He married Barney's sister, the owner of a coffee shop.

The evil Hassan Isnick has traced him to London, however. In coin-



cidence number two, he appears just as Frank and Barney happen to look out the window. A futile chase ensues and Barney is worsted by the Turk's evil gang.

After giving Professor Scotch "the slip," Frank sets out for Armenia with his friends. Three weeks later, the trio is in the strife-torn land, assisting refugees where possible, and heading for Father O'Hara's church at Kalgore. They encounter a deaf-mute guide, who proves to be a spy for the Hamidieh cavalry, (an organization of Kurd spahis—horsemen, commissioned by Abdul Hamid.) The party is next confronted by a detachment of Kurdish infantry, but Frank, with "a revolver of the very latest and most approved pattern" in each hand, shoots his way clear (killing only horses, however), and our heroes escape into the forest. Sadukh, who is fast losing his nerve, asks if all American boys are like Merriwell. Frank, uncharacteristically burdened with clichés, answers: "Oh, I presume there are American boys who are cowards, but they are almost as scarce as hen's teeth. The average American boy has sand to spare, is square as a brick, and will stick by his friends through thick and thin."

The Kurdish "bandits" pursue them, and a long chase ensues. Frank and Barney elude their foes, but Sardukh falls from his horse and becomes a prisoner of the Kurds. Trailing him to the town of Diargat, the plucky boys find Hassan Isnack torturing the young Armenian to make him reveal his sister's whereabouts. ("Lay on, Aziz...till the cries of the dirty dog make music for our ears!" snarls Isnack.) A perfect pistol shot from Barney puts a bullet in the torturer's brain, while Frank cuts the rope holding Sadukh with an equally remarkable shot. Two more shots put out the lamps, and the boys snatch the victim from the room. Sadukh manages to sprain his ankle. To save his friends, Frank keeps the enemy at bay with his unerring revolvers, actually shooting several of the wretches. (In later stories, Merriwell goes to great lengths to avoid killing living creatures, even to preserve his own life.)

At last they reach Lucine Marderos' refuge in a cavern, where her father lies dying. Both Frank and Barney are struck by the girl's beauty,

Frank observing that "I can understand why a Kurd chief like Mousa Beg should make such great efforts to obtain possession of her." Struck hard, Barney tells Frank:

"Ye have girruls enough av yer own."

"Well?"

"Kape off me presarves...Don't take offinse. It's the girruls pwhat fall in love wid yez, an' nivver a bit to blame they are at all, at all."

After this romantic interlude in a dank cave, surrounded by enemies, Sardukh and Lucine's father tells the boys of a dying vision he has seen: "a great uprising in America—an uprising of Christian men and women who demanded justice for the Armenians. He has seen Christian America aroused and calling to other Christian nations to join her in throttling the corrupt Turkish power. He has seen America sending her warships to the Bosphorus, while laggard England held back. He has seen Abdul the Condemned in his hour of woe and retribution. He has seen Turkey turn and divided, but the Armenians set free. He has seen spectral armies of murdered thousands rise from their graves to rejoice over the downfall of the vile Mohammedan power."

Delivered of this oratorical burden, the old father dies happy and is interred in the cave. A spy of Hassan Isnack discovers the party soon afterward and the group, guided by a family friend, takes flight. After a fierce fight on the road, the fugitives reach Chemstan, a town in the process of being sacked by the Kurds and Turks. Their guide is killed and a stray bullet grazes Frank's head. Half-stunned, he watches "dying persons writhing in their gore" and aged people cut down amid cries of "Padi-shahum chock yasa!" (Long live the Sultan!) He watches "a gang of blood-stained wretches who forced eight crying, trembling children to stand in a line, that one bullet might be shot through them all. He saw half-naked and half-dead girls dragged through the dust by their inhuman captors. And there were horrors which he beheld that cannot be described."

When he recovers his wits, Frank dashes to rejoin his friends. In a little church, he finds Lucine, with Hassan Isnack and his band about to capture her. "Stand back!" cried Frank, commandingly. "Not one of you shall lay a hand on her!" (This scene inspired the colored-cover illustration by Stacy Burch, better known for his ROVER BOYS drawings.)

In the nick of time, Barney and Armenian reinforcements arrive. Barney shoots Isnack dead and the Kurds are driven off. The next day the four friends escape from ruined Chemstan and make their way to Mersina (Mersin on the Mediterranean, north of Cyprus). Barney, Sadukh and Lucine go to London, while Frank joins Professor Scotch in Jerusalem.

Perhaps, if the United States had not been so preoccupied by internal economic problems and the Cuban question, American marines might well have stormed ashore on Turkish soil. This, however, did not happen, for all of Gilbert Patten's rhetoric. The aging Clara Barton and an American Red Cross contingent went instead. When it came time to reprint the MERRIWELLS, Street & Smith made a wise decision not to include this somewhat embarrassing story. Unlike Patten's usual work, the geography is fuzzy and Frank's actions are circumscribed by a yellow-journalistic version of history.

Rival publisher Frank Tousey was impressed enough with this tale to produce a pale imitation five months later. After reprinting the original JACK HARKAWAY series twice in his *Wide Awake Library*, Tousey began producing his own continuation of YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY'S adventures. Although credited to Bracebridge Hemmyng, who had returned to London about a decade

earlier, they bear the style of Tousey's house writers. Taking his cue from the original YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY AND HIS BOY TINKER, who battle Turks, Tousey produced *Wide Awake Library* No. 1314: YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY IN ARMENIA; OR, A FIGHT WITH THE TURKS, on April 9, 1897. In this feeble effort, one of the series' recurrent villains, the Russian spy, Irrosk, is responsible for stirring up the Turks against the Armenians! Other than the cardboard backdrops and a few platitudes, most of the yarn has little to do with the Armenian atrocities. In the end, Irrosk escapes to join Jack's other enemy, Hunston, in the Balkans, there to plot further mischief.

Historically, Abdul Hamid II continued on the Ottoman throne until 1909, when he was deposed and exiled by the extremist "Young Turk" movement. Following three years' banishment, he was returned to Constantinople in 1912 and died under house arrest in 1918. Abdul's brother was set up as Mohammed V, a puppet ruler under the control of the Young Turks. The Armenian troubles continued sporadically, breaking out again in the massacres of 1915 and 1916, during World War I. In his 1917 propaganda booklet, *THE MURDEROUS TYRANNY OF THE TURKS*, the young Arnold J. Toynbee declared that the Ottoman Empire's "history as a Vampire-State is unparalleled in the history of the world." He lashed out at the Young Turks and their "programme of 'Ottomanisation,'" which resulted in more efficient slaughter than that carried out under Abdul Hamid II. This he blamed on Prussian influence.

In fact, although the Berlin authorities officially ignored these excesses committed by their ally, German military personnel attached to the Turkish armies openly protested. Some even gathered and later published photographic and documentary evidence of what the Berlin censors called "matters which concern only the internal administration of that land." Several graphic accounts of the 1915 massacres may be found in Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld's *SEXUAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD WAR*, (NY: Cadillac Publishing Co., 1941) and in Donald E. Miller and Laura Touryan Miller's *SURVIVORS, AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE* (University of California Press, 1933).

The remaining six stories in the first group of "lost Merriwells" will be the subjects of future articles. Although they fall below the high standard of the series as a whole, they do not deserve the obscurity of the bleak Armenian venture.

* * * * *

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